



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INDEPENDENCE MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO UNAUTHORIZED WEARING OF CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR, FALSE IDENTIFICATION CHARGES

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that an Independence, Mo., man pleaded guilty today to the unauthorized wearing of the Congressional Medal of Honor, and to the possession and production of false identification documents and the possession of an identification document-making implement.

Ralph Ervin Crowder, 46, of Independence, Mo., waived his right to indictment by a grand jury and pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Gary A. Fenner to a four-count information filed in federal court today. **Crowder** was originally charged in a federal criminal complaint filed on July 11, 2002.

Count One of the information charges that on July 1, 2002, **Crowder** possessed, with the intent to use and transfer unlawfully, five or more false identification documents that appeared to have been issued by or under the authority of a governmental entity. According to Graves, those documents included:

- * A document containing **Crowder's** picture and identifying him as Roy A. Toups, a United State Navy Rear Admiral and a member of the National Security Agency.

- * A document containing **Crowder's** picture and identifying him as Roy A. Toups, a member of the National Security Agency.

- * A document containing **Crowder's** picture and identifying him as Roy A. Toups, which purports to have been issued by "Seventh Army Headquarters" and is represented to be an "Intelligence Specialists Pass" granting him access to all sites located in the Seventh Army area.

- * A document appearing to be issued by a state government entitled "State Identification" containing the picture of **Crowder**, which states his name is John Rhodelander and identifies him as a "Data Entry Clerk" working for Jackson County, Mo.

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* A document appearing to be issued by the government of Jackson County entitled “Identification,” containing **Crowder’s** picture, which states that his name is John Rhodelander and identifies him as a “Data Entry Clerk” working for Jackson County, Mo.

* A document entitled “Identification” that states his name is John Rhodelander.

* A document entitled “Identification” that states his name is John Rhodelander and identifies him as a “Security Officer” working for Vanguard Security, Inc.

* A blank document appearing to be issued by an international organization or government entitled “International Driving Permit,” which, when completed with information concerning a particular individual, is of the type intended and commonly accepted for the purpose of identification of individuals.

Count Two of the information charges **Crowder** with providing a false identification document to federal law enforcement agents on July 1, 2002.

Count Three of the information charges **Crowder** with possession of an identification document-making implement, with the intent that the implement would be used in the production of a false identification document.

Count Four of the information charges **Crowder** with wearing the Congressional Medal of Honor without authority.

According to Graves, **Crowder** was convicted of a fraudulent check charge in Cole County, Mo., on August 28, 1978, and placed on probation for three years pursuant to a suspended imposition of sentence. **Crowder** admitted in his plea agreement that he absconded from supervision and moved to the Las Vegas, Nevada, area to avoid being arrested for violation of his probation. After moving to the Las Vegas area, **Crowder** admitted, he adopted the name Roy A. Toups as an alias in an effort to avoid being arrested.

Crowder, using the name of Toups, moved to the Kansas City area in the mid-1980s, Graves said, and afterward married while using that alias. **Crowder** admitted in his plea agreement that he used false identification documents to support his claims to his wife that he had served in the United States military and was involved in undercover work on behalf of the United States government, a ruse that helped explain his extended periods of absence from their home. In reality, Graves said, **Crowder** never served in the United States military and was never employed by any agency of the United States government for any purpose.

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Beginning sometime between 1999 and 2000, while still using the false identity of Roy A. Toups, **Crowder** began residing sporadically at the Independence, Mo., residence of another woman. **Crowder** did not disclose his true identity to her, Graves said, nor did he disclose the fact that he was married. Instead, **Crowder** admitted that he made numerous false representations and produced false identification documents to support his false identity as well as his claims that he was a retired United States Navy admiral, that he had been a Navy SEAL, and that he had been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Still using the false identify of Roy A. Toups, Graves said, **Crowder** began a relationship and became engaged to a third woman. He made the same false representations to her, according to the plea agreement, not disclosing his previous marriage and likewise producing false identification documents to support his false identify as well as his claims that he was a retired United States Navy admiral, that he had been a Navy SEAL, and that he had been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. **Crowder** admitted that he also gave her a picture of himself wearing a United States Navy admiral's summer dress uniform in which he was wearing numerous military decorations, including the Congressional Medal of Honor.

That photograph, Graves said, was observed on display at the woman's workplace by a Navy veteran visiting the office, who reported to FBI agents that he noticed several discrepancies in the placement of the medals on **Crowder's** uniform that caused him to doubt the authenticity of the photograph.

When contacted by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation on July 1, 2002, and asked to produce documentation of his identity, Graves said, **Crowder** presented the agents with a document containing his picture that not only stated his name was Roy A. Toups, but that further identified him as a member of the National Security Agency.

According to Graves, **Crowder** later told FBI agents that he had purchased the Navy uniform and medals at a surplus store in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

As a result of today's plea agreement, **Crowder** may be subject to a sentence of up to 34 years in prison plus a fine up to \$850,000. The sentence will be determined according to the United States Sentencing Guidelines. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled sometime after the completion of a presentence investigation by the U.S. Probation Office.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Gene Porter. It was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow